

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 and 35-56 were pending, claims 8-16 and 38 of which were withdrawn. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 35 are amended, new claim 57 is added, and claims 8-16, 38, and 41 are canceled. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of pending claims 1-7, 35-37, 39-40, and 42-57 are respectfully solicited.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's allowance of claim 47.

Claims 1, 4-6, 48, and 50-56 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by *Maier* (U.S. Patent No. 5,853,187). Applicants traverse this rejection for the following reasons.

With respect to amended claim 1, *Maier* does not disclose or suggest a combination of recitations including, among others, that the "centrally disposed intermediate portion has a tubular cross-section," as recited in amended claim 1. Dependent claims 4-6, 48, and 50-52 are patentable at least because they depend from claim 1.

To the extent that the Examiner might assert that amended claim 1 is obvious over *Maier* in view of *Westerdale* (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0021295 A1), Applicants traverse such a rejection. It would not have been obvious to incorporate the "cross tube ends" of *Westerdale* into the hitch in *Maier* because the two hitches are constructed in entirely different manners. The hitch in *Maier* is apparently bent from "angle iron." See *Maier*, col. 3, lines 47-48. In contrast, the hitch in *Westerdale* is constructed by welding vehicle supports 38 to the cross tube ends 20. See *Westerdale*, ¶ [0027] and FIG. 3. Absent Applicants' own disclosure, it would not have been obvious to incorporate *Westerdale*'s cross tube ends into the hitch in *Maier*. Accordingly, claim 1, as well as its dependent claims 4-6, 48, and 50-52 are patentable over *Maier* and/or *Westerdale*.

With respect to claims 4 and 53, Applicants traverse the Examiner's anticipation rejection because *Maier* does not disclose or suggest a combination of recitations including, among others, that the end portions include "an elbow section with a general U-shaped cross-sectional configuration," as recited in claims 4 and 53. To the contrary, the elbow section disclosed in *Maier* is L-shaped, not U-shaped. The recited U shape differs from an L shape because opposite ends of a "U" are generally parallel to each other, while opposite ends of an "L" are generally perpendicular to each other. Applicants note that the Examiner previously asserted that "L" shaped ends and "U" shapes ends rendered the embodiments disclosed in FIGS. 1 and 10 of the present application patentably distinct. See March 16, 2005 Election/Restriction, ¶ 4. The Examiner's assertion analogously applies to an elbow section

as well such that L-shaped and U-shaped elbow sections are patentably distinct. Accordingly, *Maier* does not disclose or suggest the recitations in claims 4 and 53. Dependent claims 54-56 are allowable at least because they depend from independent claim 53.

Applicants therefore respectfully request the withdrawal of the anticipation rejection of claims 1, 4-6, 48, and 50-56.

Claims 3 and 7 were rejected as obvious over *Maier* in view of *Westerdale*. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. Claims 3 and 7 are patentable over *Maier* in view of *Westerdale*, at least because they depend from independent claim 1, which, as discussed above, is patentable over *Maier* in view of *Westerdale*. Applicants therefore respectfully request the withdrawal of the obviousness rejection of claims 3 and 7.

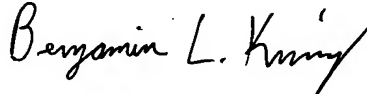
Claims 35-36, 39, 41, 42, 44-46, and 49 were rejected as obvious over *Maier* in view of *Grice* (U.S. Patent No. 5,011,177). Applicants traverse this rejection as applied to amended independent claim 35, which is amended to incorporate the subject matter of dependent claim 41. Neither *Maier* nor *Grice* nor their combination disclose or suggest a combination of recitations including, among others, that the end portions each include "an elbow section with a general U-shaped cross-sectional configuration," as recited in amended claim 35.

Claims 40 and 43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over *Maier* in view of *Grice*, and in further view of *Westerdale*. Applicants traverse this rejection at least because claims 40 and 43 depend from patentable independent claim 35. Neither *Maier* nor *Grice* nor *Westerdale* nor their combination disclose or suggest a combination of recitations including, among others, that the end portions each include "an elbow section with a general U-shaped cross-sectional configuration," as recited in amended claim 35.

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Respectfully submitted,



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